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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S., IRAN, U.S.-RUSSIA, CHINA-UK,
GERMANY-
AFGHANISTAN;BERLIN

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[1](#)1. Lead Stories Summary

Print media led with reports on the debate in Germany over the introduction of full-body scanners at German airports. Other stories include China's execution of a British national and falling hotel prices. Editorials focused on the same issues. ZDF-TV's early evening newscast heute and ARD-TV's early evening newscast Tagesschau opened with reports on tougher security measures at German airports following the failed attack in Detroit.

[1](#)2. (U.S.) Aftermath of Failed Terrorist Attack, Debate in Germany

All papers (12/30) continue to discuss the impact of the failed terrorist attack in Detroit. The discussion in Germany is now focusing on whether the introduction of full-body scanners would violate the privacy rights of passengers and whether they are safe.

Sueddeutsche Zeitung, however, criticized President Obama's reaction to the attack: "President Obama hesitated three days before he reassured the U.S. public. This period was clearly too long. A nation that can easily be alarmed in the era of a constant exposure to news simply needs the reassurance of their president that everything

is under control. But Obama and his advisors have underestimated this need. The consequence is that [opposition politicians] can now ridicule this government in such a highly sensitive issue.... But it was the predecessor government that introduced the current system.

The annoying thing is that the laudable calm in dealing with the terror danger is now being used to assail the president and his government. Now he must reject the false view that he is too soft in the fight against terror. Obama could hardly look worse in this affair."

Die Welt (12/30) judged in a front-page editorial: "Privacy finds its limits when the life of others is at risk, and that is the case in this matter. People who are worried and put their privacy above the lives of others should not underestimate the extent to which Germans would like to stay alive. Those who are more afraid of a full body scanner than of an air crash live in a world that is not a real."

National radio station Deutschlandfunk (12/29) commented: "This failed terrorist attempt showed one thing: Al-Qaida continues to be a great

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danger; its fighters continue to look for new ways and tricks on how to hit the hated western world. It is a race that the western community of nations is about to lose if security gaps are not finally closed with first-rate technology. All sides involved must be aware of the fact that the privacy rights of individuals must always be on the agenda. And it must also be clear that the facts of international terrorism are not affected by these security considerations."

In an editorial Sueddeutsche Zeitung (12/30) had this to say: "The excitement in politics about the scanning of people is only half as great as it was a year ago. The uniform rejection has turned into a 'let's look-how-it-works.' Security experts increasingly avoid the term 'naked' [full body scanners are called 'naked scanners in Germany]. The naked scanning is now called body scanning. We hear the message but still do not believe in what the experts say. With such announcements, this scanning is being minimized. In security policy we are witnessing a gross generalization of things that were unthinkable a while ago."

Berliner Zeitung (12/30) is critical of the new scanners and judged:

"Experts are threatening that, without 'naked' scanners, embarrassing body searches would be necessary, and that is why the scanner would be a clean, acceptable alternative. And those who react to these arguments...with abstract terms such as basic rights and human dignity are considered naive dreamers. Long ago, the majority of people also accepted restrictions of their individual freedoms and rights in the name of security. It is certainly right that all decisions be

based
on laws. But we should be allowed to remind everyone of the fact
that
the perception of such steps has changed. Only a while ago, such
practices were considered excesses of dictatorships and their craze
to
control and monitor everything and everyone."

Regional daily Neue Osnabrcker Zeitung (12/30) argued: "In the
political jargon, the naked scanner has turned into a full body
scanner. The new wording shows the future direction. [Even the FDP]

is now arguing that the scanner gives no reason for concern as long
as
human dignity is preserved. But the FDP or the supporters of this
technology do not say how this can happen. That is why it would be
good if they concentrated on the things that are feasible. We want
to
remind everyone that the attacker from Amsterdam would have been
discovered if he had been intensely searched - without a naked
scanner. The vigilance of everyone at the security gates counts....
If
this technology really allowed controls without degradation, it may

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be
used as a supplementary measure. But today's naked scanners are not
compatible with human dignity and the change of terminology cannot
obscure this fact."

13. (Iran) Protests, Ahmadinejad Remarks

In an editorial, Frankfurter Allgemeine (12/30) argued: "Unimpressed
by international protests, the regime in Tehran intensifies the
repression against supporters of the opposition. The increasingly
brutal response against regime critics shows the gravity of the
threat
the ruling caste perceives in the protests. Such a process can
hardly
be influenced from abroad, but western policy is not condemned to
idly
watch events either. The head of the Foreign Affairs Committee of
the
Bundestag, Ruprecht Polenz, made a proposal that should be
introduced
into talks to coordinate an international reaction: restrict the
travel possibilities of members of the Iranian security apparatus.

This should not be the only restriction, but it would be a necessary
step to isolate the Tehran regime."

Sueddeutsche Zeitung (12/30) observed: "Sanctions must primarily
serve
as a replacement for a military strike which Europe and America are
not seriously considering, because it would destabilize the Gulf
states and jeopardize the recovery of the global economy. Iran's
economy is not well off. It is hard to say to what extent the
current
sanctions contributed to this, since Ahmadinejad's botched policy
also
contributed to this misery. At least the boycott has made many
goods
more expensive. It is uncertain whether future boycotts will have a
greater effect. Russia and China must also support it. Travel
restrictions would have only minor effects, since military officials
and arms technicians only visit neighboring countries."

In the opinion of Financial Times Deutschland (12/30), "It is self
evident that President Obama, Foreign Secretary Miliband, and
Chancellor Merkel have criticized the brute moves of Iran's security

forces. The words of western politicians are a signal to the reformers in Iran that the major part of the West is on its side. But they are no more than words. What will now happen in Iran is in the hands of the Iranian leadership and the opposition reformist forces, not in Obama and Merkel's hands. Still, the West should not stop supporting the reformers and the larger their base the better. Americans and Europeans should try to prompt Russia and non-Western states to condemn the violence of the Iranian regime. This would take away a central argument of the regime that the protests are controlled

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by the West. In addition, the West should approve clearly targeted sanctions. Travel bans and a freeze of business relations could be reasonable."

Weekly Die Zeit had this to say: "The Iranian regime is also able to take advantage of Twitter and Cloud computing...but nevertheless it was unable to suppress the second Iranian revolution. It is surviving on the most powerful revolution since the industrial revolution: that of information."

14. (U.S.-Russia) START talks, Putin Remarks

According to Frankfurter Allgemeine (12/30), "Russia continues to pin its hopes on a strategic parity with the United States. The START talks have progressed to such a degree that they could be concluded

soon. But obviously, Moscow does not follow President Obama's reasoning, that this agreement serve primarily as the beginning of further disarmament steps and as a strengthening of the NPT regime.

Russia now wants to develop new offensive weapons. But it would be better if both sides continued to negotiate. And this all the more so, because Obama and Putin agreed before to address the problems of both offensive and defensive systems."

15. (China) Execution of British National

All papers (12/30) carried extensive coverage of the execution of British national Akhmal Shaikh. Frankfurter Allgemeine led with the

headline: "China Allows Execution of British National," while Sueddeutsche Zeitung headlined: "Shock at Fatal Injection For British National." The daily wrote that it is the "first time since 1951 that

China executed a foreigner. The execution again cast a light on China's execution practices. According to Amnesty International in

2007 alone, China allegedly executed 7003 people. The majority of trials against these people took place behind closed doors." Financial Times Deutschland reported under the headline: "Execution in China Angers the British," and wrote that the execution of a British

national has caused serious diplomatic tensions between China and the

UK. PM Gordon Brown condemned the execution and said he was appalled that calls for mercy went unheard."

Frankfurter Allgemeine (12/30) opined: "China likes to ignore Western wishes and requests. At COP15 it acted as a climate saboteur; a dissident received a long prison sentence, and now a Briton was executed. Obviously, the powers-that-be are unable to walk because they fell so strong. Americans and Europeans are now finding out what this is like. And if they dare to protest, they are beaten with the

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'respect-of-our-sovereignty' stick. This execution reveals the vast difference in the legal systems - and China's contempt of the West."

Sueddeutsche Zeitung (12/30) editorialized under the headline: "The Injured Vast Empire," that "China does not know any balance in international relations. The leadership often lacks diplomatic pliancy. Honor and pride are all of a sudden important, even though they are unsuited standards for political success. China refuses to tolerate any criticism if an opposition politician is sentenced to a long jail term. A spokeswoman complains about interference if the circumstances of an execution should be investigated. The political leadership is boycotting others who receive the Dalai Lama. But the outrage will not go away. On the contrary, China is now rapidly experiencing what it means to be an unloved hegemon."

Bild-Zeitung (12/30) judged: "Again, the Chinese regime showed its ugly, brutal face...and again the outrage is only mild. Why? Because no one wants to burden relations with China? China has been convinced for a long time that it can dictate its conditions to the West, ranging from climate protection to the treatment of the Dalai Lama.

But every day, more than 100 people are executed in China...human rights are trampled on. But we need not simply accept this! China needs many more lessons in democracy. But it will get this only if the international community cohesively exerts pressure on China - politically and economically."

Regional daily Braunschweiger Zeitung (12/30) argued: "The Chinese Foreign Ministry calls accusations from London unfounded and calls upon the British to correct their abnormal behavior to avoid a danger to Anglo-Chinese relations. This is the usual approach that the Asian power always uses if does not like the response from another nation.

The case of the Briton must draw the attention to the fact that China executes hundreds of people every year and that Chinese justice authorities consider themselves the tough arm of the state power. It is a mockery that western experts again and again point to great progress in the new global power, as long as human rights are violated and as long as it is part of every day life that [justice authorities] make short work of people."

According to Westdeutsche Zeitung of Dsseldorf (12/30), "it would be naQve to think that the protests of human rights organizations would change the situation in China. The Chinese reaction is only a cold

smile. The regime acts in a much too self-confident way on the global

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stage, and the COP15 demonstrated this again. China will by no means turn into a state according to the western understanding of democracy only because it once signed a UN Convention on Civil Rights. Unfortunately, this is reality."

16. (Germany-Afghanistan) Afghanistan Conference

Sueddeutsche Zeitung (12/30) deals in a lengthy editorial with Germany's loyalty to its alliances and noted: "No one is accusing Germany of not being tormenting with the question of whether and when it would be willing to use military force after the events in Kunduz. But this naval-gazing is now irritating Germany's partners in the EU

and in NATO, and we hear voices saying that one cannot count on Germany once the going gets tough; that Germany likes to enjoy the protection of NATO but will not be a reliable partner if other members ask for support. There are growing doubts about Germany's loyalty to the alliance. If it was the goal of the Berlin government to confuse its partners, then it was Foreign Minister Westerwelle, who defiantly and childishly threatened to boycott the Afghanistan conference in London. But the Social Democrats also contribute to this because they look at Afghanistan primarily from a domestic point of view....

In the future, the EU will be asked to play a more important role in foreign and security policy whether it wants to or not. For Germany, it is not an alternative to focus on itself. If it does not want to

react but wants to act, it must be proactive, using everything that is necessary. Such self-contemplation may be important for a parliamentary fact finding committee looking into the events in Kunduz, but as far as international matters are concerned, it is much more important for the Berlin government not only to show up at the

conference in London but also to present its strategic considerations. And, of course, the number of German troops matters. The security situation in Afghanistan requires this. And this is what the allies and partners expect Germany to do. They want clarity about whether Germany is a reliable partner in this difficult situation."

DELAWIE